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POPTOMOV REVIEWS STATE OF THE NATION

Speaking at the celebration held at the National Theater of Sofia on the eve of the Liberation Anniversary of 9 September, Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Poptomov reviewed the international and domestic situation of Bulgaria during the past year.

In the domain of international affairs, he emphasized that the friendship and cooperation with the USSR had been further consolidated by several new agreements, aimed at increasing the economic, technical, and scientific assistance extended by the latter to the Bulgarian nation. The cooperation with the other People's Democracies has also been extended, whereas new friends have been acquired by establishing normal diplomatic and economic relations with the Chinese People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, and the Mongolian People's Republic.

Inside the country, national integrity and independence have been secured by eliminating the interference of the Anglo-American imperialists. As a consequence of this rebuff, the latter, using the services of the Kostov gang, launched a furious attack on Bulgaria and framed a number of false accusations against the country through the intermediary of the so-called Special Commission for the Balkan States, whose real purpose was to cover the attacks and provocations on Bulgaria's national boundaries by the Greek and Turkish Fascists and the Tito clique. As a final stroke in this campaign of hostilities, the US broke off diplomatic relations with Bulgaria. However, the fact remains that Bulgaria's neighbors to the south and west are directly or indirectly supporting the American aggression in Korea and the warmongering policies of that country, thus creating an atmosphere of unrest throughout the Balkan area.

The internal situation was further strengthened and the devotion and loyalty of the people to its government were reaffirmed in the elections to the National Assembly of 18 December 1949, at which 98.89 percent of the population participated and 92.01 percent cast their votes for the Fatherland Front. The enthusiastic celebration of Stalin's 70th birthday and the signing of the Stockholm Peace Appeal by an overwhelming majority of all the people throughout the country were further indications of the political alertness and unanimity in the nation.

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The people's soviets are drawing increasing numbers of citizens into participation in administration and public affairs. As of the present, 62,000 people are active in the permanent work commissions of the soviets. Workers' and women's organizations, trade unions, cooperatives, youth organizations, and other associations are also taking an active part in establishing government policies, and the growing cooperation between the rural and urban population is forming an essential basis for the Fatherland Front government.

The Bulgarian Communist Party is the unanimously recognized ideological and political leader of the nation, upheld by the expert Bolshevik guidance of Vulko Chervenkov. The January Plenary Session of the Central Committee and the Third National Convention of the Bulgarian Communist Party have strongly emphasized the principle of criticism and self-criticism, the fight against deviations from the party line or government policy, and the elimination from public life of all hostile and alien elements. Clear and efficient work programs have been adopted for the operations of every ministry. The entire population is showing an increasing understanding and support of government policies, indicated by the successful campaign for the delivery of this year's harvest quotas: the grain was delivered in record time and the work was perfectly organized.

The Bulgarian Army is eagerly studying and following the experiences and methods of the Soviet Army, and is keeping a careful watch on the national borders.

The National Militia and the National Security Agency are entrusted with the task of safeguarding public law and order and preventing any possible disruption promoted by the subversive and spy activities of the imperialist agencies and other hostile elements.

In the field of economy, 1949 was the first year under the Five-Year Plan, and during this period plan fulfillment was exceeded by 28 percent, whereas the number of workers increased by 50,000 compared to 1948.

Production in the main branches of industry during the first 7 months of 1950 considerably surpassed the corresponding period in 1949; the greatest emphasis was given to the development of the production equipment industry. As compared to 1949, the production of electric power increased threefold, coal production doubled, ore production increased 15 times, metallurgical production 28 times, and machine building 50 times. About 54 new types of machines have been produced domestically since the beginning of the Five-Year Plan, and most of them are manufactured serially. Due to the domestic production of this machinery, 2,800,000 leva in foreign currency have been saved.

The production of consumers' goods has also been considerably increased.

Special attention will be given during the current year to industrial constructions. Among the projects already completed for operation are the synthetic ultramarine dye factory, the factory for making cutin-free sulfate, and others. The following projects will be completed before the end of the year: three flotation installations, the Asenitsa hydroelectric power plant, and the Kurilo-Mezdra and Kurilo-Plovdiv power lines.

However, the assortments and standards of industrial production goods have shown very little progress, and cost reduction is also still in its initial stages; nonetheless, in the first quarter of 1950 costs were reduced by 4.35 percent, or 1,805,000,000 leva, proving that substantial progress can be achieved in this field with the proper zeal and energy.

The private sector has been entirely eliminated in large-scale industry, whereas in the small local industries it has shrunk from 0.7 percent in 1949 to 0.2 percent in the present year. The total share of private business in the industrial sector amounts at present to 0.1 percent.

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In the textile industry, 4,300 workers have adopted the system of simultaneous operation of several looms, and in the cotton industry already 40 percent of the workers are operating multiple machines; 2,100 miners are operating on the multistope and cyclic work system. High-speed metal cutting is also being adopted by an ever-increasing number of workers in the metal industry; recently an operator of Plant No 11 cut 1,340 meters of aluminum per minute and 400 meters of steel.

However, not everything is satisfactory in industrial production. The productive capacity of the enterprises is still far from being fully utilized, and the production process is not proceeding at a steady, even pace. The struggle for better standards and assortments is still continuing, as well as the fight for stricter work discipline, waste reduction, etc.

Agricultural work has shown excellent progress during the past year and fall sowing has been completed according to government calendars. The 1949 deep-plowing plan has been completed by 98 percent against only 25 percent in 1948. The area of oleaginous industrial plants in 1950 increased by 3.4 percent over 1949, the cotton area by 24, the hemp area by 22, and the tobacco-planting area by 17 percent.

Quota deliveries of wheat, rye, barley, oats, and spelt were completed in a surprisingly short time, despite the furious opposition of the kulaks.

Livestock farming has been considerably expanded, and cross breeding conducted on a much larger scale; however, livestock production is still far from supplying the needs of consumers and industry.

Irrigation projects have been given considerable attention, and the irrigated areas at present cover 1,300,000 decarees of land. Forestry operations have also been highly successful, and good progress has been reached in forestation, reforestation, replenishing of sparse plantings, and the establishment of mixed plantings.

The increase in Farm Workers' Cooperatives has been the most gratifying. By the end of August 1950, the number of cooperatives had reached 2,053 with 14,350,330 decarees of land, or 29.4 of the cultivated area of the country. In effect, out of the 1,095,000 farms operated throughout the country, 361,966 are included in Farm Workers' Cooperatives, or 33 percent of the total number. The highest enrollments are registered in the grain-producing areas. The yields on cooperative farms have been the highest ever reached; thus, for example, a cooperative farm in Bogdan Village, Karlovo Okoliya, harvested 436 kilograms of wheat per decare from an area of 16 decarees. A cooperative in Dryanov, Lovech Okoliya, harvested 400 kilograms of the same crop per decare from a 200-decare area; a cooperative in Kostinovo Village, Plovdiv Okoliya, harvested 402 kilograms of rye from a 115-decare area, while one in Khaskovo Okoliya picked 131 kilograms of cotton per decare from a 200-decare area. A cooperative in Lovech Okoliya collected 4 kilograms of wool from each of 100 sheep and 142 lambs, and during 1949 it obtained 4,225 liters of milk from each of ten cows, and average litters of 21 pigs from each of its ten sows.

The number of state farms has now reached 91, with 850,000 decarees of land. They supply all other farms with planting and sowing material as well as breeding stock. During 1949, the number of machine tractor stations rose from 86 to 95, and the number of tractors included 105 heavy machines with a corresponding number of attachments imported from the USSR.

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Furthermore, domestic industry produced the following agricultural machines in 1950: 57 threshers, 332 disk harrows, 185 cultivators, and 288 drills. The compulsory sale of agricultural machinery to the state has added 229 tractors, 988 threshers, and 844 locomobiles. However, the machine tractor stations are still not supplying the quantity and quality of work that is expected of them.

Great progress has been accomplished in the field of transportation. Due to the introduction of large-capacity freight trains, shipments this year exceeded the norm by 2 million tons and the average gross weight of trains increased by 17 percent. Lignite has been adopted for locomotive fueling, and switches are being maintained in perfect order. The loading and unloading of ships has been considerably accelerated, and the "self-repair" system has further contributed to better circulation of ships. Thus, for example, during July of 1950, the Smirenski made four trips on the Bulgarian-Soviet line and fulfilled its monthly plan by 200 percent.

Financial stabilization has also made further progress, and the development of the economy has strengthened the value of the Bulgarian lev. Whereas the budgets of previous regimes always closed with a deficit, the 1950 budget shows a 9-billion leva surplus of revenues over expenditures, which will be an additional support for the national currency. The main source of revenue is the socialized economy; only 10 percent comes from taxes. In effect, 80 percent of all revenues are derived from nationalized enterprises, and 10 percent from public services. The total wage fund has increased by 23.6 percent, of which 20.3 percent is used in industry. During the first 6 months of 1950, the flow of goods increased by 25 percent over the corresponding period in 1949. The food supply of the population is well assured; the ration system has been improved and is gradually being replaced by the free sales system; the quantity of goods sold on the free market is continuously increasing. The government policy tends to reduce the prices of consumers' goods, and has already brought substantial reductions in the price of bread, dairy products, beans, stoves, beds, sewing thread, electric bulbs, and other goods sold on the free market. The price of potatoes and vegetables has dropped by 30-50 percent in comparison with 1949, and the government is continuing to take all measures to prevent price rises on the free market.

The rural population is now provided with industrial goods more abundantly than heretofore, and new shipments of the most important commodities have recently been dispatched to rural areas, including 700,000 meters of cotton, 120,000 meters of woollen fabrics, 50,000 meters of silk, 500 tons of lighting gas, 3,000 tons of cement, 30,000 cubic meters of construction materials, etc.

The volume of foreign trade has substantially increased. Exchange of goods with the USSR has increased by 20 percent over 1949. Export trade with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, the German Democratic Republic, and Albania is also on the increase. Unfortunately, insufficient flexibility and efficiency are still handicapping this branch of trade.

The health services are providing more than one-half of the population with free medical care. About 3,500 beds have been added in hospitals, and a number of new health centers, sanatoriums, and maternity clinics have been opened throughout the country, especially in the rural areas. Child mortality has decreased since 1944 by more than 30 percent per thousand of population, whereas the birth rate increased in this period from 21.9 to 25.23 per thousand of population. Infectious diseases are also steadily decreasing, especially malaria, which has decreased five times.

The educational system is now being adapted to the Soviet pattern through the establishment of a unified type of school; 147 schools of the new system have been opened this year. There are now 9,500 secondary schools for the 1,200,000 students throughout the country. During the past year, the number of educational institutions increased by 190, and the number of students by 102,912. The number of nurseries and kindergartens is also continually increasing. The country has ten institutions of higher learning with 20 faculties and 60 special departments.

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During 1949, these institutions were attended by 36,637 students, and 2,567 studied abroad, mainly in the USSR and the People's Democracies. According to a decree of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the government, aiming at creating a new intellectual group among the working population, 1,458 students who have not completed their secondary education are being trained in special accelerated courses. After graduation they will be admitted to institutions of higher learning.

In spite of the numerous accomplishments in every branch of national activity, the goals of progress set by the present government are still far from being reached. One of the most serious shortcomings lies in the failure to provide the population with a sufficient supply of consumers' goods, but every effort is being done to overcome the shortages.

The industrialization of the country and the mechanization of agriculture are also among the important assignments which have not been fulfilled so far.

The above program of peacetime economy and cultural pursuits set up by the Bulgarian government indicates a sharp contrast with the plans of imperialist countries, aimed exclusively at rearmament for the next world war. On the occasion of its national holiday, the Bulgarian nation reaffirms its unshaken desire for peace and its solidarity with the USSR to check the American aggression in Korea, to liberate the Korean territory from foreign armies, and to bring about a peaceful solution of the Korean problem.

The meeting was attended by Soviet Marshal Budenny, representatives of the People's Democracies, the Republics of China and North Korea, and by Eduardo d'Onofrio from the Italian Communist Party.

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